

*J. Roper*  
DISCOURSE

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ON 1-10.

CONFIRMATION.

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By ISAAC MANN, D. D.

*16*  
LORD BISHOP OF CORK AND ROSS.

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FIFTH EDITION.

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*Then laid they their Hands on them, and they  
received the Holy Ghost. Acts xviii. 17.*

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DISCOURSE

ON

DISCOURSE  
CONFIRMATION.

OF MR. J. A. AND R. S.

OF THE BISHOP OF C. AND R. S.



FIFTH EDITION.

Printed and Sold by S. WARD,  
at the Sign of the Crown, in St. Paul's Church-yard, London.

A DISCOURSE

ON

CONFIRMATION.

AS I purpose shortly, God willing, to administer the Office of Confirmation, I cannot but wish, that the Nature of it may be well considered before hand by all such young Persons as are then to be presented to me; that they may have a just Sense of the Importance, and come duly prepared to partake of the Benefit of this Ordinance. In order therefore to assist you in that Preparation, I will lay before you in a plain and familiar Manner the following Particulars.

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I. The

## 4 A DISCOURSE ON

I. The Antiquity and Authority of this Institution;

II. Its true Nature and Rank;

III. The Stipulations and Conditions to be entered into at Confirmation;

IV. The Benefit and Usefulness of the Office;

V. The proper Age of receiving it;

VI. The Duties and Obligations which are comprehended and implied therein.

I. This Institution is of primitive Antiquity in the Christian Church, and derives its Authority from the holy Scriptures. For there the Laying on of Hands (by which has always been understood the Rite of Confirmation) is reckoned, as well as Baptism, among the original, fundamental Principles of Christianity. Heb. vi. 2. We may therefore well conclude it to have been the constant Custom (of which several Instances are actually recorded) that in the earliest Times they who were converted and became Christians, were afterwards by Imposition of Hands CONFIRMED in the Religion they had chosen: that is, they were not only further instructed in the Faith and Practice required by  
their



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their Profession, but were likewise strengthened and supported in their Christian Course by the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit conveyed by the laying on of Hands. This was *then* done by the Apostles, who were enabled to confer many miraculous Powers peculiar indeed to those Days, because they were *then* particularly requisite for the more speedy and effectual Propagation of the Gospel. But besides these extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, which continued no longer in the Church than they were necessary to that End, the Apostles likewise unquestionably conferred the ordinary ones, which are of perpetual Use and Necessity in all Times, and which by St. Paul's Method of Reasoning concerning those wonderful Gifts, we are authorized to esteem as a more excellent Way. 1 Cor. xii. 31. I mean such spiritual Aids and Assistances, as by helping the Infirmities of our frail and corrupt Nature, and strengthening virtuous and religious Dispositions in the Heart, might counteract the force of Temptation, and firmly establish Men in the Practice of their Duty.

Now these Gifts of Grace and Holiness are no Doubt still mercifully continued to God's faithful People, when sought for with devout Supplication and Prayer. God hath promised without any Limitation of Time, to give his holy Spirit to every one that asks it:

And can we doubt that he will hear the devout Prayers of his Church, solemnly assembled together in his Presence, with an Intent to confirm the religious Principles of the rising Generation, and to establish his Kingdom in their Hearts? Christ hath promised that wherever two or three shall be gathered together in his Name, there will he be in the midst of them: And can we doubt his Approbation and Blessing of the pious Work we are engaged in? He vouchsafed with the most affectionate and tender Condescension to take young Children up in his Arms, to lay his Hands upon them and bless them, declaring that of such is the Kingdom of God: And can we think that he will reject the free-will Offering of such as are desirous solemnly to dedicate the Prime of their Life to his Service? God was pleased in a supernatural and miraculous Manner by the Hands of the Apostles to confer the extraordinary Gifts of the holy Spirit: And may we not most assuredly trust, that He who is no Respecter of Persons, that He who has promised to be with his Church to the End of the World, to keep it under his continual Protection and Government, will be pleased to sanctify and bless every Ordinance, by whomsoever administered, the Object of which is the increasing and establishing the Influence of Piety and Virtue: for what is that but the very Purpose  
for

## CONFIRMATION. 2

for which the Ministry of Christ upon Earth was appointed?

Such then is the Antiquity and such the Authority of this Institution, founded on the Example of the Apostles, and most reasonably continued down through the several Ages of the Church upon this undeniable Principle, that the Goodness and Grace of God, when duly implored, will ever be extended to all his faithful People, to guide and support them in the Way of Truth and Righteousness.

II. The true Nature of Confirmation with its proper Rank among Christian Ordinances (which is our 2d Point) will easily be understood from what hath been already said.

It is an Apostolical Practice, not founded upon any Blind Tradition, but recorded in Scripture and *upon that* we rest it: Not that we account it a Sacrament (as it is held in the Church of Rome) for this plain Reason, that it has no external Sign, or Form, appointed by Christ, which you all know, is essential to the Institution of a Sacrament properly so called. They do indeed suppose the Chrism, together with the Sign of the Cross, to be the Form, or outward and visible Sign of this Ordinance: but it is a Sign appointed not by Christ, but by themselves, without colour of

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Authority

Authority from Scripture, or any Precedent of the primitive Church. In the first and purest Days of Christianity, Confirmation was administred without any other Ceremonies than laying on of Hands with Prayer, and this is the Precedent which is followed by our Church, according to the original Simplicity of the Institution.

The laying on of Hands, is obviously significant of Affection and Good will, as appears both by the Practice of the Patriarchs, and that of our blessed Saviour already alluded to. This external Act, though not of the Nature of a Sacrament, is yet justly styled a Sign to certify the Persons confirmed of God's Favour to them, a Token and Memorial of the Divine Gifts and Graces accompanying the due Use of this religious Office. Not that we pretend to have the Power of conveying the Divine Favour, and Blessing of our own arbitrary Will and Pleasure; for that cannot be conveyed by the Hands or the Prayers of any Man whatsoever, but to such only as are duly qualified by the good Disposition of their Hearts to receive it. It is not ours to give, but it shall be given by our heavenly Father to them who are prepared for it; to them who lift up their Hearts from earthly things to heavenly, and take Care to become fit Temples for the Holy Ghost.

III. Hence

## CONFIRMATION. 9

III. Hence ariseth, 3dly the Necessity of certain solemn Stipulations and Promises to be made before Confirmation is administered.

The Apostles themselves cannot be supposed to have laid their Hands on any for the Purpose of conferring the Gifts of the Holy Spirit without a certain Assurance of their adhering to the Profession they had embraced. Much less, do WE, their unworthy Successors! presume to administer the Office of Confirmation without requiring (our Church hath expressly appointed it) an explicit and personal Declaration from every one who comes to be confirmed, that he doth, "in the  
" Presence of God and of the Congregation  
" renew the solemn Promise and Vow, that  
" was made in his Name at his Baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in his own  
" Person, and acknowledging himself bound to  
" believe and to do all those things which his  
" Godfathers and Godmothers then undertook for him." Every Person is asked whether he does this, and before the Office is proceeded in he must solemnly answer "I DO." Whoever then comes to be confirmed, instead of imagining that he has nothing to do but receive the Bishop's Blessing, must on the contrary seriously consider that he hath an important Office to perform, which if he doth not perform, no Blessing, no Effect of the Blessing will follow. For, as in



Baptism it is not the mere Ceremony of sprinkling or washing the Body with Water that can save us, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God; or in other Words, a Covenant conscientiously entered into with God, that the Heart shall be sprinkled (as the Scripture expresses it) from an evil Conscience, which is declared for the Infant by its Sponsors; so in like Manner in this Office the same Engagement and Covenant is made by the Persons themselves, who being now come to Years of Discretion, publicly profess, that they are bound to believe and do whatsoever was promised in their Name and Behalf; which is expressed in the Catechism in these three Particulars; viz. "1st that  
 " they will renounce the Devil and all his  
 " Works, the Poms and Vanities of this  
 " wicked World and all the sinful Lusts of  
 " the Flesh; 2dly, that they will believe all  
 " the Articles of the Christian Faith, and 3dly,  
 " that they will keep God's holy Will and  
 " Commandments and walk in the same all  
 " the Days of their Life." I state the very Words of the Catechism, as being probably most familiar to the Youth who are about to be presented for Confirmation; but I trust, nevertheless, that there are a few of them, to whom the full Sense and Import of this solemn Renunciation and Promise have not been duly explained by their Parents, or their Pastors, if not by both. Sure I am, too much Care  
 cannot

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cannot be taken in this Point by either. Neither is the additional Attention of the Sponsors, where it can be applied, and there is Need of it, by any Means to be dispensed with. The Church has appointed them for the Purpose of superintending the religious Education of the Child, and they have entered into a voluntary Engagement, that they will, as far as in them lies, provide that he shall be brought up to lead a Godly and Christian Life. This Engagement you are now to discharge them from and to take upon yourselves. May you do so with Sincerity and Seriousness!

Without such a Stipulation as this, the Office of Confirmation, it must be confessed, would be but an useless and unmeaning Superstition; whilst on the other Hand, if this be duly attended to, it cannot but appear to the serious and unprejudiced a most rational, venerable and important Rite. Under this Description it was consented to and approved by the most learned Lutheran Doctors (in a Conference at Ratisbon 1541) "as a religious Rite of the highest Advantage to the Edification of Youth and of the whole Church, agreeable to Scripture and uncorrupt Antiquity." \*Nor is Calvin's Testimony wanting in Favour of this Practice.

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His

\* Chemnitz Exam. Conc. Trident. part 2.

His Words are, " Such Imposition of Hands  
 " implies no more than a Benediction I com-  
 " mend, and wish it were instantly restored  
 " to its genuine Use." And again; " The  
 " Gesture used by the Apostles, I look upon  
 " as a Recommendation and Offering as it  
 " were, of the Person to God."|| And he is  
 followed in his Opinion of the Utility and  
 Expediency of Confirmation by some of the  
 most eminent Divines of his Persuasion. §  
 Such was the early opinion of the Foreign  
 Churches concerning this Rite when admin-  
 istered in its proper Form and primitive Sim-  
 plicity; and nothing but the unhappy Defect  
 in their Form of Church Government can be  
 supposed to have prevented their adopting it.  
 Indeed the Practice is said to have been some  
 years since actually restored at Geneva, † au-  
 thentic Proofs of the Fact may be seen in the  
 Library of Trinity College, Dublin. And  
 much it were to be wished that our dissenting  
 Brethren might be prevailed on to follow so  
 laudable an Example; nor is it entirely to be  
 despaired of; several of the most distinguished  
 Characters for Piety and Learning, and there-  
 fore of the highest Authority among them in  
 the

|| Calvini Inst. c. xix.

§ Limborci Theol. Christ. Lib. v. c. 77. Of-  
 tervaldi Compend. Theol. Christ. part 2.

† Abp. Secker's Serm. on Confirmation.

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the last Century having written in most favourable Terms on the Subject.\*

IV. I am to shew you in the 4th Place the Use and Benefit of Confirmation: And certainly, to impress on the Minds of Youth a just Sense of their Duty, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World; to flee from all youthful Lusts, which war against the Soul, and to keep themselves unspotted from the World; to renounce the hidden Things of Dishonesty, to do justly, to love Mercy and to walk humbly with their God; to impress a deep and early Sense of these great Duties of Morality and Religion, I say, is to lay a good Foundation against the Time to come; and we may trust, with God's Blessing, (which we solemnly implore in this Office) it will be a Defence against the Strength of Temptation.

Where the Youth of both Sexes, having been previously instructed and examined, are required to make before the Congregation a public and explicit Profession of the Duties contained in the Baptismal Vow, and of their Resolution to keep the same. The officiating Pastor pronounceth over them in a set Form a short but solemn Prayer, that God may give them Grace to fulfil their Promise, and after

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\* Mr. Baxter, Mr. Calamy, and others.

a suitable Exhortation, they kneel down, when several Prayers are offered up for them, and the Office concludes with the very same Benediction as ours. This religious Ceremony is held to be so indispensable, that without it none are acknowledged to be Members of their Church, nor admitted to the holy Communion. See the Liturgy of Neufchatel.

This Life is a State of Probation, which necessarily requires moral Restraint and Self Government, and numerous are the Trials which result from thence, though they are no other than the gracious Purposes of Divine Providence for the Proof and Improvement of Virtue; but besides these, there is a Variety of Temptations arising from the Frailty of Nature and the Perverseness of corrupt Appetites; from the Circumstances of the State of Life they are placed in, whether it be a State of Labour and Care, or of Ease and Enjoyment (and it is difficult to say which of those two Conditions is more dangerous to Virtue) for alas! what Incident or Circumstance of human Life doth not bring its own respective Temptation; whilst the Enemy of Souls is continually setting his Snares and availing himself of every Art that the most exquisite and malicious Subtily can Suggest? This being the Case, how can unexperienced and unsuspecting Youth be better guarded against these Dangers, how can they be more effectually



effectually trained up in the Way they should go, than by such a Solemnity as this?

Something like this was practised among the Jews. Every young Person at the Age of Thirteen Years being obliged to give a Proof before the Congregation of his Knowledge of the Law, and to make a solemn Declaration that from that Time forward, he looked upon himself as answerable for his own Actions, and took the Consequences on his own Head, for which before this Ceremony the Father was held to be accountable: and the Rite concluded with suitable Prayers and Praises.

V. The Age at which Confirmation is to be administred, is by our Church, with her usual Wisdom and Moderation, described in general Terms, requiring only that it be a *competent* Age, without any other Determination than that young Persons be able “to say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and answer to the other Questions in the Catechism.” By which however, it must have been intended not only that they should perfectly repeat the Rudiments of their Religion by Rote, but that being well instructed in the Meaning, and seriously entering into the Force and Spirit of them, they should be able to understand the Importance and Necessity of Faith in God

A 8

through

Christ, and of Repentance from Sin and dead Works to serve the living God, in the Love and Practice of Holiness and Virtue. When a young Person is impressed with a just Sense of these Things, he is then of a competent Age to be brought to the Bishop to be Confirmed, but not before. And although the Capacity of the human Mind, as well as the Opportunities of Instruction and Knowledge, be so exceedingly various, that no certain Age can be peremptorily specified, because none can exactly suit every particular Case, yet it is the earnest Desire of those to whom this Office is committed in our Church, that none be presented but such as are qualified in the Manner that has just been described; and as far as a general Rule can take Place, they are expected to have attained their fourteenth Year. A late most eminent Prelate, (whose Sentiments command great Respect)\* recommends the Age of sixteen Years: and for my own Part, to speak my Opinion fully and freely on the Subject, I think the whole Benefit and Efficacy of Confirmation depends so much on the Maturity of Understanding and Seriousness of Disposition, that I cannot but request that the young Persons to be presented to me should not only be of riper Years, than many frequently are, when they come to be Confirmed, but should also be well prepared

† Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, in his Directions in order to Confirmation.

# CONFIRMATION. 17

pared to receive the holy Communion *on the next Occasion.\**

The Celebration of the Lord's Supper is acknowledged to be the highest and most solemn Part of publick Worship; but it is alas! the most neglected, whether it be through groundless Scruples, or hardened Indifference. Some, perhaps, by indulging crude Notions of the sublime and mysterious Nature of the Sacrament, may be overwhelmed by a Sense of their own Unworthiness, and so by a most strange Perversion, the very Height of their Veneration for its awful Sanctity drives them into a Disuse of it. Such as these, whose Error proceeds from a Disposition, though ill directed, yet truly religious, are to be treated with great Compassion, and may be taught, one would hope, to adopt more proper Notions, by contemplating that holy Institution in its practical and gracious Intention to strengthen and confirm the Soul in Habits of Goodness, and to refresh and comfort us lest we be wearied and faint in our Minds. In all our Conflicts it is most useful for us to look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. It is our Duty to set him before us as our Pattern and follow his

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Steps,

\* This is expressly required in the Review of the Office, 1689.

Steps. His Humility consisted not in declining, but obeying the Will of God, and so ought ours. In a strict Sense none of us can be worthy of the least of God's Mercies: but the less worthy of them we know ourselves to be, the greater ought to be our Thankfulness for them; and is not the holy Communion a Sacrifice, as it were, of Praise and Thanksgiving, which it must, surely, be meet and right and our bounden Duty to offer? Nor can any kind of Unworthiness, except Sin persisted in without Repentance, be any just Hinderance to communicating.

The Nature and the Occasion of St. Paul's Denunciation against unworthy Receivers, 1 Cor. xi. have been much misunderstood. He threatens *temporal* Punishment, viz. Sicknens and Death: We are too apt rashly to extend it to everlasting Punishment in the World to come; for which his Words give no just Ground. What he there condemns, was no Doubt, an Act of the most outrageous Profaneness. The Corinthians, in their Communion did not discern the Lord's Body; they did not consider the Nature of the Lord's Supper, nor attend to its proper End and Design; but instead of keeping up the religious Purpose for which they appeared to come together, to shew forth the Lord's Death, by a devout Remembrance of his Body broken, and his Blood shed, for the Sins of the World, they

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they made a luxurious and disorderly Feast, to the Dishonour of God and the Contempt of their poor Christian Brethren. But what Resemblance is there between this Case and that which we are describing? Nay, how can the Crime which the Corinthians were guilty of be now committed? There is no Christian Church in our Days, of whatever Sect or Profession, in which due Care is not taken, according to their respective Customs, for the regular and devout Celebration of the Lord's Supper. This, if well considered, must tend to remove such Scruples.

But the Unworthiness that most prevails is not this voluntary Humility, which keeps Men from the Lord's Table, but the Unworthiness of a thoughtless and wicked Life. For Want of Instruction in their Youth, (which is the proper Season for sowing good Seed in the Heart) they enter upon their different Stations in the World without much Concern or Care about Religion, which they take upon Trust from the Practice that happens to prevail; and if they think at all on the Subject, are willing to flatter themselves, that it will be as well at the last with them as with their Neighbours. And thus, unhappy Mortals! though their Hopes of Salvation in the next World are built upon the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, they wilfully pass their whose Time in this without even commemorating



rating that precious Death. If on some solemn Occasion they find it proper to save Appearances, they then alledge that they are not prepared. But what is their Notion of Sacramental Preparations? What Steps have they taken towards it? These are Points which it imports them to put to their own Consciences, and that not lightly, or as Dissemblers with God, but seriously and earnestly, as highly concerning the Salvation of their Souls. And God grant that they may come to a timely and just Sense of the Danger of their Condition, and amending their Ways and their Doings, may walk in all the Commandments of the Lord, blameless!

The holy Communion how sacred soever in itself, or how abstrusely soever it may be represented, will appear in a clear and true Light if you consult your Bible and Common-prayer Book. St Paul directs, Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup; and the last Answer in the Church Catechism contains every Article of Examination that can be necessary for that Purpose. And what can there be in this, which is too much to require of Youth when come to Years of Discretion? What Time indeed can be so proper to enter on this religious Duty, as when the Soul is free from any very foul Corruption, and voluntarily dedicated to the Service  
of

## C O N F I R M A T I O N. 21

of God by a solemn and explicit Engagement? It is only when the Conscience is defiled by Habits of Sin, that Men are afraid to look into themselves, and to put off the Task from Time to Time, and thereby make it much the more burdensome. But whatever Difficulty may arise from delaying this necessary Work, it might be prevented by a regular Perseverance in a very plain and easy Method, which I will take this Opportunity to recommend to both young and old; to the young, because it cannot be begun too early, and to the old, because it ought not to be left off at any Time of Life. The Method I speak of is this. Every Night seriously to review the Passages of the preceding Day; to call yourselves to account not only for every gross Transgression, but every Word you have spoken, and every Thought you have wilfully enterained in your Heart, which had any Tendency to Profaneness, Malevolence, or Impurity: Remembering however, that as in a moral Light nothing that is the object of our Desires and Designs is so slight as to be insignificant, so on the other Hand, nothing that is not cherished and encouraged by the Inclination and Will is at all the Subject of Self-examination. Wandering Thoughts which dart into the Mind we know not how, without our Concurrence, and pass through it, or remain there without our Approbation, are not in our Power to control,

control, and consequently cannot be chargeable to our Account. By the Discipline of daily Self-examination in this rational Method, you will always know the true State of your Souls, and by reforming, as you find Occasion, what is amiss, you will never be unprepared for the Lord's Supper, but may always safely partake of it with humble Confidence in the Merits of your blessed Saviour.

Such as have neglected to receive the holy Sacrament until they are advanced in Life, and then offer themselves for Confirmation, if they have any rational Notion of the Office, ought not only (as hath been recommended to the young) to communicate the very first Opportunity, but likewise to continue with them in the frequent and devout Use of that great Duty, which was appointed by Christ for the gracious Purpose of strengthening and refreshing the Soul, and making it more lively and vigorous in every Act of Devotion and Obedience.

As to those who have been Partakers of the holy Communion, let them consider that Confirmation is not designed for their Use. By receiving the Lord's Supper they have already ratified and renewed their baptismal Vows, and as far as they live a suitable Life, may devoutly expect every Benefit that can be received from this preparatory Institution.

And

And let them likewise who have been already Confirmed consider, that it is not only unnecessary, but improper, to repeat a Ceremony which is to ratify the Covenant made in Baptism; because Baptism itself can be administered but once, there being but one Baptism for the Remission of Sins. What then is the Repeating of Confirmation, but laying again the Foundation, when you ought to be compleating the Superstructure, when you ought to be continually advancing from Strength to Strength, and endeavouring to come unto a perfect Man?

VI. I come now in the last Place to speak of the Obligations and Duties required and implied by this religious Rite. And they are most numerous and weighty; being in Fact no less than all that you owe to God, your Neighbour and yourself. In short, the Obligation you are about to take upon yourself is that most comprehensive one of leading in all Respects (whatever Station or Condition you may be in) an holy and a Christian Life; a Life of the most humble Reverence for the infinite Perfections of God, of Submission to his Will, and of Obedience to his Commands; a Life of Justice and Integrity in all your Dealings with others, of charitable Candor for their Faults and Compassion for their Wants; a Life of Temperance and Sobriety in the Use of the  
good

good Things of this World, of Patience and Contentment under the evil Things, and such a watchful Government of your Temper and Passions, as may, with the Divine Blessing, preserve you from all Uncleaness of Flesh and Spirit. By this Course you may habitually direct all your Actions and Designs to the Glory of God, and by your Example recommend and adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.

To be bound to so many Duties may perhaps be reckoned a Burden and Hardship; as we are hereby obliged to give up many Pleasures, which we see are so highly valued and eagerly pursued by others: and yet if this be fairly stated and rightly understood, it will on the contrary appear to be in Truth a Blessing and Happiness, and most heartily ought you to thank your heavenly Father that he hath thus called you to a State of Salvation. Sensual and Sinful Indulgences, how delusive soever they may be to such as give themselves no Trouble to consider their natural Effects and Consequences, cannot deceive those who reflect that they are at the very best vain and transitory, and when enjoyed without Moderation or Restraint, productive of much real lasting Misery. They undermine the native Ease and Tranquillity of your Mind; deprive you of the delightful Consciousness of the Divine Favor, bring upon



upon you present Shame and Remorse, and a most fearful looking for of Judgment and Indignation at the last Day. All this, I say, is the certain Effect of a wicked Life; whereas, on the other Hand, the proper Government of our Appetites and Passions, the subduing inordinate Lusts and keeping the several Powers and Faculties of the Mind under due Regulation and in Harmony with each other; (which is the Essence of practical Christianity) is a certain Fund of Quietness and Comfort in this Life, and Assurance of Happiness for ever in that which is to come.

Now seeing that it imports us in the highest Degree to consider well the infinite Difference of those two States, it must without Question be an unspeakable Advantage and Blessing to be apprized of that Difference betimes: This is done by our Church in the Catechism, and you are now about to declare your thankful Acquiescence in what is there required of you, as the Means of intitling yourselves to a blessed Immortality. And can that be purchased at too high a Rate? Remember the Expostulation of Naaman's Servants, "If the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?" Harken to the Ministers of God when they explain his Word, and like Naaman, you embrace  
the

the Conditions there proposed, you will not fail to be convinced, as he was, of their Efficacy. Consider yourselves as temporary Inhabitants of this World, but connected by dearer and more important Interests with the next. Suffer not the most distant Suspicion to lodge in your Breast that God is an austere and rigorous Master: He is on the contrary, the gracious, compassionate Lover of Souls. Receive not his Commandments with Reluctance, for they are not grievous; but obey them cheerfully, as intended for your Good both here and hereafter. Look upon the Engagement you are now to enter into, but as the Commencement of your spiritual Life, and take Care to lead the rest of it according to this Beginning. Reverence the excellent Nature which God hath given you. Descend not to any Practice that may pollute and debace it; but endeavour continually to grow in Grace and in Virtue. Consider that you are made but a little lower than the Angels, and designed for Immortality and Glory. Remember your Creator in the Days of your Youth. Acquaint yourselves with God, and set him always before you: for he is always present with you. He is your Inspector and Judge. Guard therefore against whatever may at any Time tempt you to displease him. Give not up your Virtue and Innocence, even in the slightest Instance. Beware of the Danger of Levity and Dissipation.

pation. They will insensibly undermine that native Modesty and Delicacy which God hath graciously planted in your Breast for a Defence against Sin. Under the Disguise of trifling Indulgences are often concealed the Arts of Seduction, to which if you once consent to listen, you will be betrayed into the Power of the Enemy, and by little and little will be wretched Slaves to Corruption and Vice; the Powers of your Mind will be so enfeebled and disabled that you cannot do the things that you would wish to do. You may see the Beauty and Excellency of Virtue; but you will nevertheless follow the most pernicious Courses. This is the Tendency of giving Way on any Occasion to what your Conscience disapproves. It is by Degrees, not all at once, that Men become desperately Wicked. Guard then, I say, against Sin in its most distant Approaches. Let neither Fashion, nor Example, nor any other Consideration prevail on you to follow a Multitude to do Evil; but let your own religious Sense of Things, your own Conviction of what is right be the constant Rule of your Actions. When any criminal Pleasures entice you, call to Mind how they were resisted and subdued in the Vigor of Youth by Joseph, and say with the like effectual Abhorrence as he did, How can I do this great Wickedness and sin against God? Read the Holy Scriptures as every Christian ought, carefully and daily. You will there find not only

only Precepts for Your Direction, but Examples for your Imitation. You will there find that holy Men have actually walked with God in this Life, and had their Conversation in Heaven, knowing that they could not hope to see God hereafter in his Glory, if they did not to the best of their Power endeavour to imitate him here in his Purity and Holiness. Keep Innocency then, I beseech you, and take Heed to the Thing that is right, for that only will bring a Man Peace at the last.

Trust not, however, my beloved Children, to the Strength of your Resolutions, or the Goodness of your own Hearts. We are at best but very weak Creatures, and tho' there are still noble Remains of Perfection in which our first Parents were created, which appear in the Knowledge and Conviction of our Duty, yet in Practice we fatally experience the Frailty and Corruption, which were introduced into our Frame by their Transgression. Our Intentions may be laudable; but our Endeavours to execute them are strangely feeble and imperfect; and when we think we stand most securely, we are frequently at that very Time most in Danger of falling. Call therefore earnestly and constantly upon God for the assistance of his Grace, to defend and deliver you from all the Deceits of the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Be diligent and regular

## CONFIRMATION. 29

gular in the Worship of God, both in your private Devotions and in the publick Service of the Church; not forsaking (as the Manner of too many is) the holy Table, for which the Office of Confirmation, as I have shewn, is intended to prepare you. And I pray God, your Hearts may in Reality be so well prepared, that you may fitly and devoutly shew forth the Lord's Death, not only in that blessed Sacrament, but in the whole Course of your Lives, Mortifying all corrupt Affections and Lusts, and Crucifying the whole Body of Sin.

This, my beloved Children in Christ, is what I judged might be Useful to assist you in preparing yourselves for receiving Confirmation. I have endeavoured to give you a just Sense of the Nature and Importance, the Benefits and Duties of this Institution. If I have taken somewhat a larger Compass in my Discourse than is usual perhaps on the like Occasion, it will not, I humbly trust in God, be altogether unprofitable to you. To me it is not grievous, to you it is safe. It was my Desire to furnish you with solid Principles, by which the whole Tenor of your Christian Conduct might be consistently regulated; the Basis of all which is such an habitual Reverence for the Divine Presence and Inspection as may make you earnest to approve yourselves to his all-seeing Eye in every Action  
and



and Design, in every Occurrence in Life and every Sentiment of the Heart. God is the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, and there is no Event, whether esteemed regular and important, or casual and accidental, that can happen in the World but by his Appointment or Permission. He knows all we do, or think. He is about our Path and about our Bed, and spieth out all our Ways. Our going out and our coming in, our downsitting and our uprising are all open and manifest to him; no Organ of the Body, no Faculty of the Mind, no possible Circumstance of our Being can be hid from his Knowledge, or elude his Cognizance. He therefore ought to be in all our Thoughts. A Regularity in the Morning and Evening Worship may by some be thought sufficient. But Whoever wishes to confine his Intercourse with his Maker to certain stated Returns, that Man's Religion is vain. True Religion is a Vital Principle, and its Office is to direct and invigorate our whole Frame as well on ordinary, as on solemn Occasions. The Fear and Love of God must be with our whole Mind and Strength and Soul, not only in the Duties of Religion, (though it would be happy for the World if *they* were better attended to) but in common Affairs of whatever Situation and Circumstances we are placed in by his Divine Providence. And as amidst the great Variety of Stations and Distinctions in the  
World,

## CONFIRMATION. 31

World, that which falls to any one's Share brings with it Duties more particularly personal to himself, let me therefore point out to you such Rules for the Regulation of your Conduct as appear to me to be best adapted to your respective Ranks and Conditions. And this I trust will be kindly accepted as a farther Proof of my affectionate Concern for your Spiritual and everlasting Interest.

It will not be long, my good Children, before you will be of Age to enter upon some of the various Callings of the World, and to fill the Station for which Providence designs you, in the future Course of your Life. Whatever be that Station, you are now laying the Foundation to fill it with Integrity and Virtue; and the Result of Integrity and Virtue cannot but be Credit and Happiness to yourselves, and Benefit to the Publick.

If you are placed in a lower Station, do your Duty with Humility, Contentment and Diligence, as Servants of God and accountable to him at last, for the Use of whatever Talents he has intrusted you with, be they ever so few. That holy Providence that hath appointed the several Orders and Conditions of Men, expects that we fulfil the respective Duties and Offices of the Situation we are placed in, according to the best of our Power. Idleness and Sloth are sinful in every Station. In  
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the lower Stations, Labour and Diligence are indispensably necessary. Your daily Bread cannot be had without them. Be not persuaded to neglect the proper Business of your Calling and the Care of your Family upon any Ground whatever; No, not even that you may have more Time for the Offices of Devotion. Such a Principle is not a true, well-founded, but a mistaken Reverence for Religion. They who are thus led away forget that to obey is better than Sacrifice; they forget that our Saviour condemns the Notion, that we are better heard for much speaking. It is not by exceeding our Neighbours in the Number and Length of our Prayers, but by the Honesty and Integrity of our Lives, that we can recommend ourselves to God. Be assured, that no Man can serve God more acceptably, or provide more certainly for his Happiness in the next World, than he who carefully, and in the Fear of God, dischargeth his Duty in some honest Employment in this.

If your Lot be cast among the higher Ranks, let me exhort you to use your Superiority with Thankfulness to him who giveth you richly all Things to enjoy; with due Government of your Passions and Desires; with obliging Courtesy and Affability to your Inferiors; with Compassion and Charity to the distressed; with paternal Care of those who in the lower Employments, depend on you  
for

## C O N F I R M A T I O N. 33

for Bread; and with Benefit to all as far as your Influence can reach. Instead of presuming on your Abilities to do Mischief (which is no better than being a wild Beast to your Fellow Creatures) remember that true Dignity is to be maintained only by doing Good, and Respect is to be gained only by making those Talents, with which Divine Providence hath been pleased to distinguish you, the Means of a general Blessing.

If your Station be in the middle Rank, that is happily free from the Temptations and Evils of either Extreme, and was prefer'd by wise and pious Agur on that Account; and though the Support of such a State requires the Exertion of Industry and Diligence, Frugality and Carefulness, be thankful that *with* this Exertion you can acquire all the essential Comforts of Life. Aim not at Things too high for you, but with Modesty and Sobriety conform to the Circumstances of your Situation; apply to your Business with due Diligence, whether it be your Farm, or your Merchandize, Whatsoever thine Hand findeth to do, do it with all thy Might. But take Heed at the same Time, that your Hearts be not engrossed by the Cares and Riches of this Life. For, they will lay you open to the Temptations of Fraud and Dishonesty. In all your Dealings let this great Truth be uppermost in your Minds, that you have a Soul to  
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be saved, as well as a Fortune to make. Set not your Hearts on the Profits and Pleasures this World can give, were it possible you could obtain them all. For, what shall it profit a Man if he should gain the whole World and lose his own Soul? Consider yourselves as made for nobler Enjoyments than this World can bestow. Seek therefore before all Things the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and (as the wise Son of Sirach exhorts) Glorify your Soul in Meekness, and give it Honour according to the Dignity thereof. (Ecclus. x. 28.)

To this Advice for your Conduct in that State of Life to which it shall please God respectively to call you, let me take this Occasion to add a Word or two, in which all who hear me are concerned whatever be their Condition and Circumstances. What I mean to say is in Behalf of the Church, of which by your own solemn Act you are now to declare yourselves to be Members. Let me entreat you, when you shall be settled in the World, that you will retain in your Mind a due Sense of the Purity and Excellency of that Church to which you belong; that you will retain a just Love and Regard for its Doctrine and Constitution, and a becoming Zeal for its Welfare and Prosperity. We are surrounded by those who bear no good Will to this our Sion. It is the more necessary for  
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# CONFIRMATION. 35

her Sons to stand up in her Defence, and to  
 cherish her Establishment; not indeed with  
 an illiberal Party Spirit, but although with  
 brotherly Indulgence to the Prejudices of o-  
 thers, yet with a warm Affection for the Prin-  
 ciples in which you were educated and con-  
 firmed, with due Regard for the Ministers  
 whether superior, or inferior, of that Church  
 of which you are professed Members; to es-  
 teem them very highly in Love for their  
 Work sake, and in Consequence and Testi-  
 mony of that Love, to respect their Persons,  
 and kindly to protect them in the Enjoyment  
 of their Rights and Properties. We desire  
 not to have Dominion over your Faith, but  
 to be Helpers of your Joy. Let not our Mo-  
 deration perversly become the Occasion of  
 your Lukewarmness and Indifference towards  
 us. No: my beloved, we look for better  
 Things from you. As Ours is the only  
 Church to which you can have Recourse for  
 Confirmation (in a rational Scriptural Way)  
 we trust that you will keep this in Remem-  
 brance, and in Proportion to the Earnestness  
 with which you have now desired the Bles-  
 sing which we humbly trust, will, by God's  
 Grace, accompany this Rite, you will bear a  
 good Will, as well as to them who instruct  
 and prepare you for it, as to those who are  
 appointed to confer it. In particular we en-  
 treat you to remember us in your Prayers,  
 and to implore a Blessing upon all the Offices  
 of

of our Church; so that as it is established by the Law of the Land, upon the best Model of Antiquity, it may please God to continue it for Ages, an Example to other Christian Churches, both in the Purity of its Doctrine, the Moderation of its Discipline, and the Excellency of the Lives of its Members.

F I N I S.